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ABSTRACT

All liberal arts courses at Macomb County Community College where teacher contact with students exceeded the hours for which students obtained academic credit were examined, and comparisons were made with five neighboring universities and eight neighboring community colleges. Macomb's practice of paying for additional teaching time out of general revenues was found to be the most usual practice among the schools in the sample. However, for every course at Macomb in which the contact-credit hour ratio exceeded 1:1, at least one post-secondary institution in the sample, usually a university, had a contact-credit hour ratio considerably lower than Macomb's. If Macomb adopted a lower contact-credit hour ratio, considerable savings would result, because instructors would be generating more credit hours per full teaching load. Calculating according to the lowest ratios of the colleges in the sample, $357,504 would have been the savings in liberal arts for 1974-75. (NHM)

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Macomb County Community College

Department of Research

Project No. 0010-75

Contact - Credit Hour Ratio:

Can Narrowing the Gap Lead to Legitimate Cost-Savings?

January 22, 1976

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The college subsidizes a considerable amount of teaching for which it receives no funding from the student or from the state. There are many courses where the hours a teacher is in contact with his students exceed the hours for which the students obtain academic credit; in each of these cases, the college pays for this additional teaching time out of general revenues. For instance, in Physical Education activities courses, such as tennis or swimming, the college pays for two teacher contact hours; the student and the state pay for only one. Obviously if the gap between contact and credit hours were narrowed, the college would save. However, two questions must be answered: 1) is Macomb's practice the usual one at most Michigan colleges? 2) are there Michigan colleges where the contact-credit hour ratio is considerably lower than Macomb's for parallel courses?

All liberal arts courses where contact exceeded credit hours in 1974-75 were examined and comparisons were made with five neighboring universities and eight neighboring community colleges.[1] As it turned out, Macomb's practice in assigning excess contact hours was the most usual one in our sample. However, wide variance exists, and we found that there was at least one post-secondary institution in our sample, usually a university, which had a contact-credit hour ratio considerably lower than Macomb's. If Macomb adopted this lower contact-credit hour ratio, considerable saving would result. In Physical Education activities courses alone, the college would have saved $104,229 by moving to Eastern Michigan's 1:1 ratio. In liberal arts courses, total saving by moving Macomb's courses to the low point in the range would have been $357,504. The savings would have resulted from the fact that each instructor teaching a course in a laboratory science, in studio art or in language, music or physical education would

[1]Western, Eastern, Wayne, Michigan State, Oakland, Oakland CC, St.Clair CC, Schoolcraft, Washtenaw, Mott, Wayne CC, Delta

have been generating more credit hours per full teaching load. For instance, two Chemistry 118's were a full load: 14 contact, but only 8 credit hours. Under the new system it would take 3 such courses to add up to a full load: 15 contact, 12 credit hours.[2]

$357,504 would have been the savings only in liberal arts and only for 1974-75. The savings now would be higher because more sections are offered. In addition, the savings would probably increase

1) if our sample were enlarged to include all Michigan post-secondary institutions. As a result, the low point in the contact-credit hour range would in all probability be lowered for some courses;
2) if the 104 Macomb courses in occupational areas where contact exceed credit hours were considered;
3) if we added a factor that would account for additional courses students might take because they were going to school fewer hours for the same academic credit.

Finally, what of the arguments against this reduction of contact hours? It is not possible to argue that it increases teacher load, because it does not. Nor is it possible to argue that it is educationally unsound, because all changes would be in conformity with regional educational practice.

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[2]Because the savings would be in extra contractual and part-time pay, only these funds were used in making our calculations.

FISCAL YEAR 74-75

	Contact Credit Hour Ratio at Macomb FY 74-75 [1]	Low Point of Range	Colleges in Sample at Low Point	Savings by Moving Ratio to Low Point
SOUTH CAMPUS				
SCIENCE				
Biology 100	1.90	1.30	Western Michigan	$ 14,824
Biology 110	1.75	1.00	Michigan State	4,169
Biology 120	1.75	1.30	Western Michigan	6,671
Biology 200	2.00	1.25	Michigan State, St. Clair CCC, Henry Ford CCC	2,779
Biology 210	1.67	1.40	Eastern Michigan, Mott CCC, Wayne CCC	3,370
Biology 230	2.00	1.60	Mott CCC	741
Chemistry 103	1.75	1.25	Eastern Michigan	22,238
Chemistry 104	1.75	1.25	Eastern Michigan	5,559
Chemistry 117, 118	1.75	1.20	St. Clair CCC	18,344
Chemistry 230, 231, 232	1.50	1.40	Mott CCC, Wayne CCC, Michigan State	587
Geology 111, 112	1.50	1.00	Oakland CC, Eastern Michigan, Wayne State, Oakland University	5,559
Physics 110	1.90	1.20	Oakland University	5,559
Physics 120	1.50	1.20	Oakland University	3,335
Physics 210	1.50	1.20	[2]See Below	1,112
Physics 220	1.90	1.20	[2]See Below	559
Science 101	1.90	1.13	Delta CC	2,085
Science 102	1.80	1.13	Delta CC	695
PHYSICAL EDUCATION				
All Activity Courses	2.00	1.00	Eastern Michigan	64,854
APPLIED ARTS				
All Studio Art Courses	2.00	1.00	Wayne CCC	84,773
Language	1.25	1.00	Every College in Sample	20,383
Concert Choir	2.00	1.00	Wayne CCC, Washtenaw CCC	926
Total South Campus				$269,120
CENTER CAMPUS				
SCIENCE				
Biology 100	1.75	1.30	Western Michigan	4,169
Biology 110	1.75	1.00	Michigan State	1,390
Biology 120	1.75	1.30	Western Michigan	834
Biology 220	1.50	1.40	Oakland University	185
Biology 236	1.50	1.00	Washtenaw CCC	8,338
Biology 270	1.50	1.00	Wayne State, Wayne CCC, Delta CC Washtenaw CCC, St. Clair CCC	926
Chemistry 103	2.00	1.25	Eastern Michigan	9,728
Chemistry 104	2.00	1.25	Eastern Michigan	2,779
Chemistry 107	2.00	1.20	St. Clair CCC	2,965
Chemistry 108	2.00	1.20	St. Clair CCC	1,482
PHYSICAL EDUCATION				
All Activity Courses	2.00	1.00	Eastern Michigan	39,375
APPLIED ARTS				
All APA Courses	1.50	1.00	no other colleges offered these courses	5,095
All Studio Art Courses	2.00	1.00	Wayne CCC	11,118
Total Center Campus				$ 88,384
GRAND TOTAL				$357,504

[1]Some changes have occurred since this time, but they were not taken into consideration. The study cannot be updated until the financial data for the current year is available.

[2]There were no comparable courses in the sample, so the same ratio was used as in Physics 110 and 120.